Hiking in the Yosemite

By HARRIET GEITHMANN.

IF seeing the Yosemite in all its summer glory inspired Emerson to call it "the only spot I have ever found that came up to the brag" what would he say were he to visit the Valley in midwinter?

As I left Pasadena's feathery pepper trees and palms, headed for my Seattle home, I heard the clear call of the Yosemite Valley. It was the same old call of our National Parks which said as plain as day: "Stop off several days on your way North and wallow in the snow and trek the snowy heights of the Yosemite Valley. Check off the sixth National Park from your list. Follow in the steps of the buffalo horns in Glacier National Park which say to all the world, 'I saw America first.'" I heeded the call.

At El Portal we were hustled into auto stages and buried alive in woolly blankets. That ride along the banks of the Merced River, past granite peaks towering over three thousand feet above us in the mist, noble El Capitan, the Three Brothers and the Cathedral Spires to the old fashioned Sentinel Hotel in the heart of the Valley, was an introduction that kindled my blood in spite of the frosty air.

Back of the hotel was the placid Merced, rippling along with shoulders robed in midwinter's ermine furs. The Valley artist, a hardy Norseman, sat on the back porch in the frosty air with a rapidly growing picture of the snow clad peaks on his easel and at his back a prosaic oil stove. When the Frenchman's Chinese valet, direct from Shanghai, strolled out on the verandah to enjoy the scenery I asked him, "Do you have anything like this in Shanghai?"

"No catchee; no likee; too cold," was his cryptic answer.

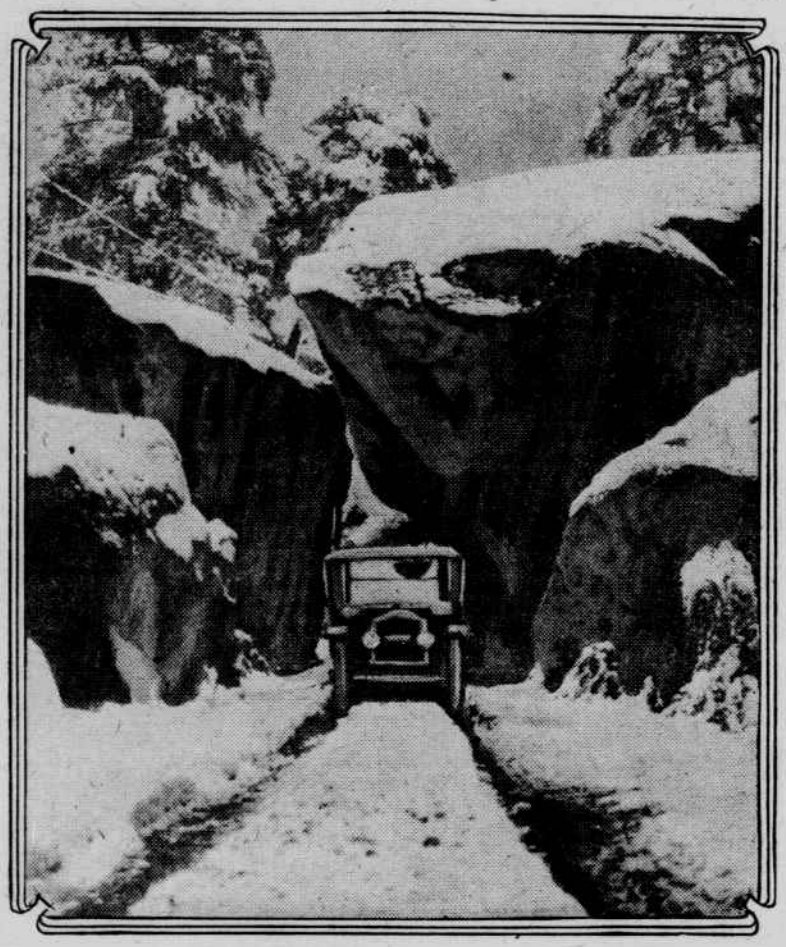
The following morning, equipped with woolens, corduroy from head to foot and moccasin boots, I was ready for a real hike. Both Vernal and Nevada Falls were calling from their snowy heights, but no one seemed to hear the call that wintry day. "Has anybody here seen Casey?" laughed some one. Presently Casey, the hardy guide, appeared on the scene ready and eager to lead the way. With our cameras and lunch in his knapsack and Pumpkin Seed snowshoes on our feet, we were off. The air was clear and sparkling, an exhilarating tonic. Crossing the level floor of the valley, covered with snow at least three feet thick, we headed for Happy Isles on the Merced. In our ears rang the merry cries of the gang shooting the toboggan chutes, the ski jumpers, the horseback riders and the sleighing parties. They were enjoying winter sports to the fullest degree, yet through all their mirth I heard the call of the heights.

We were tempted to "loaf and invite our souls" as we threaded our snowshoeing way, inch by inch, across the log bridges heaped with snow at Happy Isles, while we listened to the idling songs of the Merced and watched the joyous water ousel spring from rock to rock, dive and reappear, shaking his shining black plumage with coquettish shivers. At times he looked as if dancing the latest shimmy to the liquid music of the Merced orchestra. As I started to climb the Mist Trail with my showshoes I encountered many an entangling alliance, so we discarded them as the trail grew steeper and the drop to the river more precipitous. From then on it was safer to trust merely to our feet while we sank knee deep in February snow at every step. On several occasions I sank hip deep while my feet argued it out with the rocks below.

At Lady Franklin Rock the view of Vernal Falls was a revelation. The waters of the Merced thundered over the granite precipice into the churning, seething caldron below, adding constantly to the great icy cone on the left hand side.

Above and below hung the glistening icicles with threatening beauty. In the splashes of sunlight and shadow playing hide and seek over the falls was a rainbow full of promise. Under the overhanging cliffs we climbed through the snow until we reached the icicle cave at the right of Vernal, where Casey called a halt for luncheon. Although we would have chosen to linger there to feast on the distant views of the Sierra peaks, we had to make our lunch snappy. The drip, drip, drip of the water through the crevices in the black shining rock and the forbidding icicles overhead and fringing our trail to the top of Vernal were not inviting for a lunch at leisure. Leaving the cave we moved rapidly over the glaring steps of ice and under the overhanging icicles until we made the top of the falls.

From the top of the granite parapet erected by nature we drank in more distant views of the Valley, Glacier Point, Glacier Hotel isolated from the world because of the snow, Sierra Peak, the great domes, Mount Broderick and Liberty Cap to the left of Nevada Falls. Our mountain world was white with snow, and through it all meandered the Merced, content with being a river in the Yosemite Valley. After considerable circling around through the soft snow where we wished for snowshoes we bade a last farewell to Nevada Falls and Liberty Cap and started on our homeward hike amid a flurry of snow. The clouds were steadily growing darker and more threatening. I entertained even visions of camping on the heights under some black overhanging rock until the arrival of the rescue party. But no such luck. We lost the trail and found the trail, traced the blazes on the trees and glissaded to our hearts' content as we made for the valley below. All the while I was praying for a real snowstorm that would tie up the valley. "It looks as if you were going to get your wish," laughed Casey as we skidded homeward.



Snow clad entrance to Yosemite. Author's automobile crunching its way into the National Park.

Reaching Happy Isles, we gladly put on our snowshoes and trekked across the valley floor again. Through the orchard of the grand old pioneer, Galen Clark, we made a short cut across to the hotel. Before my mind's eye flashed pictures of the old Chief of the Yosemite Indians, Tenaya, who was so tenacious in his loves and hates, who enjoyed the fertile Yosemite with his tribe until we came along and corraled them and sent them off to the Indian Reservation, of the coming of Galen Clark and his tender love for every living thing in the valley, and then John Muir, the hardy mountaineer naturalist, who loved every inch of the 1,100 square miles in the Yosemite National Park and the high Sierras beyond. "One day," said John Muir, "in the midst of these divine glories is well worth living and toiling and starving for." And when the guide and I returned home at sundown that was the way I felt when the fourteen mile hike from valley floor to valley heights was over.

That night it snowed and snowed and snowed. In the morning over twelve inches of new white fluff were on top of the old ermine robes, and it was still snowing with a merry vengeance, and I was glad, for we were snowbound in the Yosemite. All hikes and all sports were called off. However, I managed to hike to the Yosemite Falls, which was a veritable fairyland turned loose. The thin, silvery ribbon of water plunged through the snowflakes, millions and millions of them dancing merrily against the polished walls of black granite. Every rock in the Yosemite creek, every tree, every shrub and every twig was laden with fresh fluffy down. It was too beautiful to be real, but yet my camera registers facts as they are and pictures tell the truth. On every side I heard thunderous booming of avalanches of rock and snow rushing down the canyon walls. Was I not glad of the hike to the heights the day before?

Hochstein

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tary ambition, but I know how few can lead; and I know that I would rather lead than be led.

"'The first of October will mark a year service for me and I will be granted my commission as Second Lieutenant on that date.

"'I shall at last have a raincoat that shuts out rain. I shall have many material comforts I never before had in the service but much added responsibility. I shall write you, however, soon again. The future is unknown and many things may happen.'"

"Again he writes his mother:

"'When you have seen and met men who have been through the inferno many times, every belief you ever held is either destroyed or tempered more strongly, and I have had many to destroy—in whose place I find newer, better and stronger ones. Every one finds his belief, his religion—here I have found mine. I adhere to no creed, no more than my father did, nor to any particular kind of God, but, dear mother, I *believe*. I have faith. I know that for all these heroic souls gone to the beyond there is some future. There is much that is materialistic about the war—too much. But those who die, be it recklessly or by the most unexpected exploding shell, have a compensation more than a mere title of hero or a posthumous service cross. You don't try to explain it—but you know it in France.'

"Any one who knew Hochstein would know that these were not conventional platitudes reeled off to soothe his mother. From a very thoughtful young man, critical by habit, a doubter of governments and religions and schools of thought, such statements mean something. They mean that something very revolutionary had happened in Hochstein's mind; I would give a good deal to know what it was!

"In the days when I met David Hochstein I was not writing 'One of Ours.' I was busy writing 'My Antonia,' and this latest book of mine was no more in my thoughts than it is in yours. An event which touched my own life rather closely, and which came later, produced the book. Afterward, in 1920, when I was deep in this story, I wanted my red-headed soldier from a prairie farm to 'get some of his back,' as the phrase is, through a fine friendship; so many splendid friendships grew up between young men during the war. I wanted him, in daily life, at last to have to do with someone he could admire. I had the good fortune to know a great many fine young soldiers, some of them very well, so I had a wide latitude of choice.

"But when I came to that part of the story, it was the figure of Hochstein, whom I had known so little, that walked into my study and stood beside my desk. I had not known him well, but neither would Claude Wheeler know him very well; the farmer boy hadn't the background, the sophistication to get very far with a man like Hochstein. But there was a common ground on which they could know and respect each other,—the ground on which Hochstein had met and admired his fellow soldiers at Camp Upton. And Claude would sense the other side of David and respect it. Hochstein's comrades sensed it. Lately several of them, non-commissioned officers, have taken a good deal of trouble to look me up and arrange an interview, merely to ask me whether Hochstein 'amounted to much' as a violinist. In each case these were men who knew nothing and cared nothing about music, and they apparently knew no musicians to consult. But they seemed to need this fact to complete their memory of him, to pull their mental picture of him together, though it was merely as a soldier that they had admired him."

Ossendowski

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desperado who had come out of the forests just a year before. Civilization had claimed him again and with his jaunty stride, erect carriage, moustache and imperial he looked to be just off the boulevards of Paris. In striking contrast to this latter picture is the photograph taken at Harbin in May, 1921, to accompany his passport. The few who have seen it can never forget the wonder which it excites. It discloses a face bearing the marks of almost Inquisitional horrors and mirrored there is a man whose tired gaze still shows the sharpness which preserved him in the possession of a few seconds' advantage over his assailants.

Outwardly Ossendowski is a man of great calm, though capable of strong enthusiasm. The ordinary difficulties of our everyday life affect him little. "After what I have been through nothing bothers me now," he says. And little wonder.

It is a fitting climax to the tale of this "man of amazement" that the grim determination and relentless will to persist, which more than any other factors were responsible for carrying him through the dangers of central Asia, have had their reward. No more thrilling and "satisfying" scene could close this drama of Shakespearian grandeur. In the Siberian country he turned deliberately away from the wife who had lived and suffered with him—made a decision which any but a master mind would have condemned. But he meant to fight—and fight he did, three-quarters of the way around the world, writing the story of his wanderings to secure the funds without which he could not rescue his wife—while she, true companion of such a man of steel, waged her own battle through prisons, typhus, famine and the ever present Bolsheviki to join the man she loved; but hers is another story. To-day they are in their own home in Warsaw. What endless tales their fireside must hear!